

Human Rights Council 8<sup>th</sup> Session  
Consideration of UPR Reports – Philippines

10 June

**JOINT ORAL STATEMENT** delivered by Clara Rita A. Padilla

The International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, ACPD, CLADEM, Center for Reproductive Rights, Equality Now and other NGOs in the Philippines and elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, respectfully call on the Philippine Government to reject the recommendation by the Holy See in the Working Group Report under paragraph 58 which calls for, "...the protection of children in the womb...."<sup>2</sup> The government responded that it will subject the recommendation to further study, however, the acceptance of this recommendation by the Philippines will not only be contrary to international human rights law but will further compound a major public health crisis in the country involving half a million unsafe abortion procedures every year resulting in 800 deaths<sup>3</sup> and 79,000 hospital admissions for complications from unsafe abortion<sup>4</sup>.

The recommendation is contrary to the August 2006 Concluding Comments on the Philippines where the CEDAW Committee urged the government to "remov[e the] punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion and to reduce women's maternal mortality rates in line with the Committee's general recommendation 24 on women and health and the Beijing Platform for Action."<sup>5</sup> The recommendation contravenes the UN treaty monitoring bodies' findings that access to safe and legal abortion is a matter of women's rights to life, health, non-discrimination and dignity

based on interpretations of human rights norms, commitments in global consensus documents and evidence of the impact of unsafe abortion on women's health.

The Philippine government should reject the said recommendation and instead implement the CEDAW Concluding Comments to comply with its international human rights obligations.

As reflected in Recommendation 15, we call on the government to extend a standing invitation to the Special Procedures as part of its commitment to respect, protect and fulfill women's reproductive rights.

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<sup>1</sup> EnGendeRights, Center for Empowering Communities, Manggagawang Kababaihan Mithi ay Paglaya (MAKALAYA), Women's Crisis Center, CEDAW Working Group initiative (CWGI), Public Services Labor Independent Confederation- Women for Integration Development and Equality (PSLINK-WIDE), Lesbian Advocates Philippines (LeAP!), Women's Legal Bureau, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), Karlungan Center Foundation, Inc. (Quezon City and Ia Union Offices).

<sup>2</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Philippines, April 16, 2008, A/HRC/WG.6/1/PHL/4, paragraph 58.7.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, at 5.

<sup>4</sup> Singh S et al., Unintended Pregnancy and Induced Abortion in the Philippines: Causes and Consequences, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2006, at 4 and 5.

<sup>5</sup> The CEDAW Committee stated that "barriers to women's access to appropriate health care include laws that criminalize medical procedures only needed by women and that punish women who undergo those procedures" and that "[w]hen possible, legislation criminalizing abortion could be amended to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion." (CEDAW General Recommendation No. 24, paragraph 14)